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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED PERSONS.

ACCOUNT OF THE LATE JOHN FOTHERGILL, M.D. F.R.S.

Continued from No. 14, p. 205.

IN the latter end of the year 1774, previous to the departure of Dr. Franklin out of this kingdom, an intimate friend of Dr. Fothergill being in company with a nobleman of great political experience, between whom the conversation, turning on the critical situation of the American colonies, he pressed this gentleman to attempt a compromise with Dr. Franklin, before his intended departure; and he accordingly undertook it, from a cordial wish to promote a permanent reconciliation between the two countries: on this account he immediately applied to Dr. Fothergill, who heartily united in this undertaking; and they mutually invited Dr. Franklin to a conference the same evening, and Dr. Franklin as readily accepted the invitation. This triumvirate, zealous for the welfare of both nations, devoted many hours to the important subjects of deliberation; and, after much discussion, it was mutually agreed, that they should meet again on the succeeding evening, when Dr. Franklin should commit to paper such a conciliatory plan as he conceived America had a right to expect, and that the other two, as Englishmen, should then object to such claims as they might judge Great Britain ought not to grant.

On the appointed evening, Dr. Franklin produced the following propositions; and those lines which appear in *Italics* were objected to by Dr. Fothergill and his colleague, and which Dr. Franklin gave up, and suffered to be expunged:

HINTS FOR CONVERSATION, UPON THE SUBJECT OF TERMS THAT MAY PROBABLY PRODUCE A DURABLE UNION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND HER COLONIES:

“1st. The tea destroyed, to be paid for:

2d. The tea duty act to be repealed, and all the duties that have been received upon it to be repaid into the treasuries of the several provinces from which it has been collected:

3d. The acts of navigation to be all re-enacted in the several Colonies:

4th. A naval officer, appointed by the crown, to reside in each colony, to see that these acts are observed:

5th. All the acts restraining manufactures in the Colonies, to be reconsidered:

6th. All duties arising on the acts for regulating trade with the Colonies, to be for the public use of the respective Colonies, and paid into their treasuries:

7th. The collectors and custom-house officers to be appointed by each governor, and not sent from England; the present officers to be continued only during each governor's pleasure:

8th. In consideration of the Americans maintaining their own peace establishment, and of the monopoly Britain is to have of their commerce, no requisition to be made from them in time of peace:

9th. In time of war, on requisition made by the king, with consent of parliament, every colony shall raise money by some such rule or proportion as the following: viz. If Britain, on account of the war, pays as high as 3s. in the pound to its land-tax, then the Colonies to add to their last general provincial tax a sum equal to (suppose $\frac{1}{4}$) thereof; and if Britain, on the same account, pays 4s. in the pound, then the Colonies to add to their said tax a sum equal to (suppose $\frac{1}{2}$) thereof; which additional tax is to be granted to the king, and to be employed in raising and paying men for land or sea service, furnishing provisions, transports, or for such other purposes as the king shall require and direct: and though no colony may contribute less, each may add as much by voluntary grant as they shall think proper:

10th. No troops to enter, and quarter in any colony, but with the consent of its legislature:

11th. Castle William to be restored to the province of the Massachusetts Bay:

12th. The late Massachusetts and Quebec acts to be repealed, and a free government granted to Canada:

13th The extension of the Act of

Henry VIII. concerning treason, to the Colonies, to be formally disclaimed by parliament :

14th. The American Admiralty courts reduced to the same powers they have in England, and the acts relative to them to be re-enacted in America :

15th. All Judges in the king's colony governments to be appointed during good behaviour, the Colonies fixing ample, and equally durable salaries: or, if it is thought best that the king should still continue to appoint during pleasure, then the colony assemblies to grant salaries during their pleasure, as has always heretofore been the practice:

16th. The Governors also to be supported by voluntary grants of the assemblies, as heretofore:

17th. *All power of internal legislation in the Colonies, to be disclaimed by the parliament."*

In this state a copy was taken, and imparted for negotiation; and the answer was, that the propositions were such as appeared to demand too much; and in consequence several attempts were made to reconcile the subjects of contention; but as the 12th article of the propositions was insisted on by Dr. Franklin, though many of the others were acceded to, the negotiation was broken off, and in a short time afterwards Dr. Franklin embarked for America.

The man of philanthropy, who reflects upon the fatal carnage of 100,000 victims of war, drawn from the loom, and from rural tillage; and with it the fruitless expenditure of 100 millions of money, must unavoidably regret, that the laudable exertions of the physician and the patriot were thus unhappily frustrated. Seeing, however, though distantly, the impending danger, he persevered in the same line of conduct, and renewed his endeavours to stop the effusion of blood, and to reconcile the contending parties, as will appear by the following letter, which he wrote in 1775 to a noble Lord:

"The following sketch will show rather my wishes than my hopes, of seeing the most certain, speedy, and honourable means of affecting the proposed measures :

To send as speedily as possible some

person or persons, on whom Government may rely, and who are not unknown to some of the leaders of the Congress, and on whose character and probity they may have some dependence, to propose to them:

That an act shall be passed this sessions, virtually repealing all the blameable acts, by declaring that the Colonies shall be considered as being governed by the same laws, or placed in the same situation as they were in, in the year 1762:

That in consequence of this declaration, if accepted by the Congress, the same persons shall have instructions to the commander in chief to cease all hostilities:

That a general amnesty shall be declared, all prisoners released, the provincial forces be disbanded, and the ports reciprocally opened for both countries:

That these preliminaries being fixed, instructions shall be sent to the several governors, to convene the assemblies, and require them to chuse two or more delegates, to meet a proper number of commissioners from England, at New York, and there to settle the due limits of authority on this side, and submission on theirs. The sword will never settle it as it ought to be. Submission to force, will endure no longer than superior force commands submission; interest only can make it perpetual: and it is the interest of Britain that the union should be perpetual, be the present sacrifice what it may:

The mode of proceeding in the union between England and Scotland may be adopted, so far as circumstances require; that is, the different conditions of the contenders considered. The objects are in most respects very different. From Scotland this country had chiefly in view negative advantages—that the Scots should not be any longer the tools of other powers, to work with to our undoing. From America we have every possible advantage to hope for; not only the benefits of commerce, but their power to protect us. No power in Europe, who knows its interest, and has any possessions in the Western World will chuse to offend us, whilst we and America are united; because those possessions are immediately subject to

the powers of America, directed by us: what those powers are we now know full well by experience. Every distant possession of every power in Europe, is a pledge for the good behaviour of its owner to Great Britain. Is any object we are now contending for, an equivalent to such an extensive and most certain influence?

It is therefore much to be wished, that some such persons might be pitched upon, and sent out, rather in a private character, as friends to both countries, than as public authoritative commission: for if those who are now invested in America with power, should distrust them, the business is at an end; and this country and that are left exposed to all the distresses, which are only beginning to be felt by both:

Administration may think it an easy matter to avert any storm which may arise from a discovery that they have been misled, misinformed, and grossly abused, by those on whose opinion they had too confidently relied. This, however, may admit of some doubts; and I have too much regard for many of those who compose it, to wish the experiment may ever be made:

Let it be considered, that every provocation we give widens the breach; that the Americans have fully shown they are the descendants of Englishmen; and if they are warm and impetuous like us, like us also they are pliable; and instead of endeavouring to subdue them by force to a condition unworthy of our fellow-subjects, our countrymen, and our relations, let us open the shortest road to a speedy, honourable and effectual reconciliation.

JOHN FOTHERGILL."

The following letter, which covered the above, evinces the pains Dr. Fothergill took to prevent that disunion of the empire he had predicted and feared; and, upon this account, short as it is, it is here inserted: it was addressed, under cover, to his colleague in the transactions with Dr. Franklin.

"DEAR FRIEND,

I came home last night at ten o'clock extremely fatigued. I could not forbear giving, perhaps, a very strong proof of it. If the enclosed remarks are worthy of the least notice, or any part of them, I wish we could see one

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another this morning, any time before nine o'clock."

J. FOTHERGILL.

8th of 10th mo. 1775.

In 1780, Dr. Franklin wrote to Dr. Fothergill's colleague the subsequent letter, which is introduced to corroborate the above narrative.

COPY OF A LETTER FROM DR. FRANKLIN TO
** , DATED PASSY, FEB. 12, 1781.

"DEAR SIR,

I condole with you most sincerely on the loss of our dear friend, Dr. Fothergill. I hope that some one that knew him well, will do justice to his memory, by an account of his life and character. He was a great doer of good. How much might have been done, and how much mischief prevented, if his, your, and my joint endeavours in a certain melancholy affair, had been a little more attended to! With great respect and esteem, I am, &c."

B. FRANKLIN.

In the preceding year Dr. Fothergill published a pamphlet, intitled, "An English Freenoider's Address," which is preserved in his works: it contains sentiments further explanatory of his political character; sentiments that will ever be revered.

A mutual friendship had early commenced between Dr. Fothergill and Dr. Franklin, and continued till the death of the former.

He thus writes of him to a friend. "Our late excellent friend was always proposing something for the good of mankind. You will find instances of this kind in one of his letters, which I enclose,* the only one I can at present lay my hand on. I have some very valuable ones in America, if they are not lost in the late confusions. Just before I left England, he, in conjunction with Mr. ** and myself, laboured hard to prevent the coming

* In this letter Dr. Fothergill introduces the subject of this negotiation; and, among other pertinent reflections, he suggests the importance of an uniformity of weights and measures throughout the Continent of America; taking it for granted, as he long foresaw, that she would become independent. To make these more familiar, he recommends that they should be framed of numbers easily divisible, as 4, 8, 16, 32, &c.

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war, but our endeavours were fruitless. This transaction is alluded to in the first page. If we may estimate the goodness of a man by his disposition to do good, and his constant endeavours and success in doing it, I can hardly conceive that a better man has ever existed."

Whilst he thus early disapproved those political measures which have since been generally reprobated, and long afterwards expressed his sentiments to a friend of his in Yorkshire, previous to the general assembly of the county, held on the 30th of December 1779, he uniformly mentioned his sovereign in the most respectful language; it was not on men, but on measures, that he animadverted. Henry Zouch, of Sandal, in Yorkshire, a clergyman, and a justice of the peace, of distinguished reputation, was this intimate friend (and he was worthy of his confidence) to whom he addressed the following letter, which was read in a committee of the above meeting, and met with the most pointed approbation:

"Though I am very apprehensive that the subject of this letter will be of very little consequence, yet I could not easily forego an opportunity of mentioning to thyself some sentiments that have occurred to me in respect to the very important meeting about to be held at York:

I know my voice is feeble and insignificant, but being a native of the county, and having a great regard for it, on this and many other accounts, I think I ought not to be totally silent on so important an occasion, though I know there are so many persons will be present, who, in every respect but one, I acknowledge to be greatly indeed my superiors;—that one is, a disinterested and impartial regard for the good of my native county, and the influence it will hold in the great national business that will come before you:

If the motions made for retrenchments in expense are to be the basis of your deliberations and petitions, I think them altogether unworthy;—all that could be obtained in these retrenchments, either by savings to the public treasury, or abridging the power of the crown, are beneath the notice of such an assembly, even

were you sure of obtaining all you have in contemplation. I am morally certain you will obtain nothing; and every unsuccessful contest dishartens the vanquished, and in proportion adds vigour to the conqueror:

Have we not seen this to be the case, in all the petitions and remonstrances that have been presented? and is it not most certain that the majority will be doubly firm against you, as their interest is so much at stake?

I consider these motions as well intended, and they may be followed by others equally economical and wise; but they will all be rejected, and those who have stood forth in their support be discouraged:

There is one necessary point, which I think you ought in the first place to state most clearly—the general decay of the county—and keep close to your own; manufactures declining, commerce languishing, value of land decaying, all public improvements at a stand, bankruptcies numerous, taxes encreasing, multitudes distressed; and, was it not for the late favourable seasons, universal poverty and wretchedness must have taken place. Pray, therefore, that peace may be restored between us and America, as the only means of saving your county from every species of calamity;—the war with that country, and its consequences, having been the general causes of these distresses. I do not mean that these expressions should be used; you will find much better: but if you do not lay the axe to the root, in vain do you attempt the branches:

Let not a single reflection on the king or the ministry escape you—I mean not to appear in your petition. The acrimony that loaded the American petitions, and disgraced many of our own, have done unspeakable mischief; I beg therefore, and earnestly entreat, that every degree of invective may be shunned. Produce your facts, and state them in the clearest light; but if you mean well to your country, and wish to see an example followed in other counties, shun every thing offensive. As there is no great room for flattery, so neither give way to the reverse temper;—if you do, posterity may load your memories with deserved reproach:

Forgive me for thus offering my sentiments to men much better informed than myself; but it is my firm opinion, from the knowledge I have of the temper of those who must be the judges of your petitions, that so sure as you deviate from a line of language, temperate yet firm, so sure will you shut a door more closely against all that you can urge; and what must be the consequence? A perseverance in the same measures, to do despite to those who condemn them. Once more, therefore, let me entreat that every thing manifestly offensive in language may be studiously avoided; that no bagatelles may be asked for, but the removal of the great cause of expense—the war with America: the lesser arrangements of economy may then be solicited, and these only take place at the decease of the present occupants:

Once more excuse me, if I am taking a liberty unbecoming me; the honour of our country, the good of the country in general, are at stake. If you ask for what is evidently great and right, your example will be followed by all; if you ask for things which you know before-hand will be refused, let your numbers be ever so great, you may possibly meet with many counter petitions, and an attempt for general reformation be stifled in its infancy.”

J. FOTHERGILL.

London, 8th of 10th mo, 1779.

When a man hath distinguished himself by extraordinary efforts of genius, and gained the summit of popular fame, we naturally wish to be acquainted, not only with the most interesting circumstances of his life and character, but even those which may be trifling in themselves, and which by no means would bear to be recorded, did they refer to persons of little fame; yet, when connected with a character that hath excited our admiration, or with works that we have contemplated with delight, they derive a kind of adventitious consequence from their relation, and are sought after with more avidity than greater matters of lesser men.

The person of Dr. Fothergill was of a delicate, rather of an extenuated make; his features were all character; his eye had a peculiar brilliancy of expression, yet it was not easy so to mark

the leading trait, as to disengage it from the united whole. He was remarkably active and alert, and, with a few exceptions, enjoyed a general good state of health. He had a peculiarity of address and manner, resulting from person, education, and principle; but it was so perfectly accompanied by the most engaging attentions, that he was the genuine polite man, above all forms of breeding.

His dress was remarkably neat, plain, and decent, peculiarly becoming himself; a perfect transcript of the order, and I may add, the neatness of his mind. He thought it unworthy a man of sense, and inconsistent with his character, to suffer himself to be led by the whim of fashion, and become the slave of its caprices. But this impression upon his understanding was much strengthened by his firm attachment to his principles as a Quaker, which lead to that decent plainness and modesty in dress, which may be presumed to be one, at least, amongst the external evidences of a spirit elevated in its views above all transient and sublunary things.

At his meals he was remarkably temperate; in the opinion of some, rather too abstemious, eating sparingly, but with a good relish, and rarely exceeding two glasses of wine at dinner or supper: yet, by this uniform and steady temperance, he preserved his mind vigorous and active, and his constitution equal to all his engagements.”

Religion, when it works upon the heart, and subjects the passions to the exercise of beneficence, generates all those attractive graces, which can be acquired by no other medium. Rules of exterior imitation may be delineated with the elegant pencil of a Chesterfield; but the purity of the heart is the genuine source of true politeness: for that religion, which breathes *good-will unto man*, whilst it refines the understanding, and softens the affections, begets that complacency from which necessarily result those amities, and that unaffected politeness, which alone should form the gentleman; such as the scholar should cultivate, and the Christian recommend; and these rendered a Fothergill beloved, respected and illustrious.

But the time was approaching, when neither temperance nor virtue could exempt him from the final lot of humanity. For a series of years, indeed, for the most part of his life, he had enjoyed good health, and time seemed slowly to diminish the vigour of his body, or weaken the exertion of his mind; but it was perceptible to those who were much with him, and what he often remarked himself, that fatigue became less supportable, and recruit of strength, in his annual retreats into Cheshire, was of late years more slowly acquired.

The firmest constitution, like the most perfect elastic, may be extended beyond the power of restoration. It was on the 12th day of December 1780 that he was seized with a suppression of urine, which no art could remove.

He was as serene as in perfect

health; he endeavoured, indeed, to assume a degree of cheerfulness, which was natural to him when well, and described his complaints, and their probable fatal termination, with a pious hope, "that he had not lived in vain, but in a degree to answer the end of his creation, by sacrificing interested considerations, and his own ease, to the good of his fellow-creatures." Some individuals might have envied the universal esteem he acquired by his virtues, his manners, and his skill in healing; and all may admire that comfort of mind which sustained him to his final dissolution, which was on the 26th day of December 1780.

A man so long, and so respectfully known, dying in the summit of celebrity, and surrounded with the caresses of a numerous acquaintance, must be deeply and universally regretted.

DISCOVERIES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN ARTS, MANUFACTURES, &c.

On the use of Iron for Stairs, and instead of the Timbers of Houses, as a Security against Fire. By Mr. Benjamin Cook.

Phil. Jour. vol. 21. p. 126.

IN a former paper in the Philosophical Journal, I threw out some loose hints on the advantage of employing iron in various articles of furniture, as a substitute for mahogany, and other expensive woods. I will now add to it a mode of substituting it in the place of oak, and other less expensive woods. The chief use I would recommend it for is in stairs and stair-cases, but especially in the metropolis, where so many fires are constantly happening, and where so many lives are annually lost by them; where so many plans have been devised for fire-escapes, and so few, if any, that have ever answered the end.

I have long wondered some plan has not been thought of, which provided security within doors, instead of waiting for precarious assistance from without. It is not so easy to introduce a remedy, such a remedy I am now

proposing, into houses already built; either from a parsimoniousness of the owners, or from a fancied security in the idea, that with them there is no danger, and therefore they will not go to the expense of adding a new flight of stairs, which beside the expense, will be attended with much trouble and confusion. The other class, that are likely to hinder the adoption of the remedy, are those that are not able to go to the expense of the alteration. But these persons that could afford it, and wished to provide for the danger of fire, if a probable remedy was shown them, might certainly do it; and as houses are continually altering, and new ones constantly being erected, certainly it would decrease the evil, and be introducing, if but slowly, a system that in years would increase, and be of essential utility.

The remedy I mean is stairs and stair-cases, made either of cast and sheet iron combined, or cast iron only. The framing for the stairs, to which the boards are nailed in the